



USDA-APHIS Agricultural Emergency Response Training Overview

September 2004

USDA-APHIS has recently established a relationship with the Department of Homeland Security's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP). The intent of this relationship is to allow the USDA to tap the expertise of the CDP staff and the unique infrastructure to enhance the individual response skills of USDA personnel to safely and effectively perform their duties in an agricultural disease event.

The recently released Homeland Security Presidential Directive No. 9 (HSPD-9) directs the Secretaries of Homeland Security and Agriculture to prepare their Departments and the Nation to respond to natural, accidental, and deliberate agricultural disease events. The USDA-APHIS/CDP relationship is one of several USDA action steps to improve upon USDA's initiatives to secure America's agricultural bounty.

Over the past several months, select USDA-APHIS personnel have worked in concert with the CDP staff to formulate an agricultural-specific emergency response training program. The goal of the program is to allow USDA-APHIS personnel to train in a "hands-on" environment to gain valuable knowledge and experience in the following areas:

- Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) awareness - Including Biological and Agricultural Disease Agents
- National Incident Management System (NIMS)/National Response Plan (NRP)/Incident Command System (ICS) Awareness
- Overview of Federal Policies – Homeland Security Presidential Directives
- Risk Assessment
- PPE Selection
- PPE Donning and Doffing procedures
- Decontamination – Personal and Vehicular
- Medical Triage
- Secondary WMD Site Hazards Awareness

The program is nearing completion for initial implementation to a select group of USDA-APHIS personnel. This is truly an APHIS-wide training program that is relevant to Veterinary Services, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Wildlife Services, Animal Care, and others. Additionally, there is strong interest in this program by international partners.

The initial launch of the program, titled *Agriculture Emergency Response Training (AGERT)*, is scheduled for September 8-10, 2004. The VS Professional Development Staff (PDS) has served as the principal point-of-contact between APHIS and the CDP. As such, PDS will assume lead responsibility for making final preparations for program delivery in September. This includes recruiting and selecting 16-20 candidates across APHIS to participate in the program. It is important to note that this special learning event is a pilot and will go through a few more iterations before it is finalized for wider distribution. Available candidates will be selected not only on the basis of their current skills but also their motivation to participate in and contribute to the overall success of the program.